

Message Text

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43

ACTION OES-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 FS-01 ABF-01 AGR-05 CIAE-00

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INR-07 INT-05 LOC-01 NASA-01 NSAE-00 NSF-01 OMB-01

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SUBJECT: GOE CONCERNS OVER SFCP

REF: (A) CAIRO 859, (B) CARIO 399,

1. RESPONDING TO REQUEST BY ADEL SALEH (DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES DEPT, MFA), EMBOFFS HAVE PASSED TO HIM LISTING OF ALL CURRENT SFCP PROJECTS, INCLUDING NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, COOPERATING EGYPTIAN INSTITUTION, AND TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET FOR EACH PROJECT.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING APPRECIATING, SALEH SAID THAT HE HAS RECETLY BEEN DESIGNAGED AS FOCAL POINT IN MFA FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ALL SFCP PROJECTS, THAT PREVIOUS MFA PRACTICE HAD BEEN TO REVIEW PRIMARILY ON POLITICAL GROUNDS, BUT THAT HIS SCRUTINY WOULD NOW EXTEND TO PROPOSED BUDGET. SAID HE INTENDED TO GUARD AGAINST "ABUSES" THAT HAD CREPT INTO PRGRAM, SUCH AS EXCESSIVE SALARIES, PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT SUCH AS AIR CONDITIONERS OR OVERLY EXPENSIVE VEHICLES UNNECESSARY FOR ACTUAL RESEARCH, AND FACT THAT SOME RESERACHERS WERE LISTED AS DEVOTING MORE THAN 100 PERCENT OF THEIR TIME TO VARIOUS PROJECTS. ALSO DECLARED THAT, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTIONS ABOUT SUCH "ABUSES", SOME RESERCHERS CLAIM

THAT HIGH SALARIES, UNESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT, AND THE LIKE WERE AT THE SUGGESTION OF US PROJECT OFFICERS, AND THAT THIS WAS THE WAY US SIDE WANTED ARRANGEMENTS TO BE MADE. WHILE ASKING IN EFFECT FOR US COOPERATION TO COUNTER SUCH CLAIMS, SALEH EMPHASIZED THAT HIS REVOEW WOULD NOT EXTEND TO TECHNICAL MERIT OF PROJECTS, AND THAT ANY CHANGES HE MIGHT MAKE IN PROPOSED BUDGETS WOULD ALWAYS HAVE EFFECT OF LOWERING, AND NEVER RAISING, TOTAL AMOUNT. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT US AGENCY MIGHT DESAGREE WITH HIM IN SOME CASES ABOUT WHAT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR PROJECT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO SOME ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT, SALEH INDICATED HE WOULD OF COURSE BE PREPARED TO RECONSIDER THE MATTER IN THE LIGHT OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED HIM.

3. SALEH PROPOSED IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN APPROVAL PROCEDURES. INSTEAD OF EMBASSY FORMALLY REQUESTING APPROVAL, SALEH ASKED EMBASSY TO NOTIFY HIM INFORMALLY WHEN PROJECTS ARE REACHING FINAL STAGE ON US SIDE. HE WOULD THEN REVIEW WITH THE CONCERNED EGYPTIAN INSTITUTION. THIS, HE SAID, WOULD ENABLE MFA TO DEAL MORE EASILY WITH COST QUESTIONS WITHOUT FEELING INHIBITED BY FORMAL US REQUEST. AFTER HIS REVIEW COMPLETED, AND ANY BUDGETARY ADJUSTMENTS MADE, EMBASSY WOULD BE NOTIFIED FORMALLY OF MFA APPROVAL.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: FOREGOING IS FURTHER INDICATION OF GOE CONCERNS ABOUT SFCP MANAGEMENT. WE ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT NEW PROCEDURE WILL WORK SMOOTHLY-- FOR EXAMPLE, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER SALEH, WHO ALSO HAS OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES IN HIS OB, CAN KEEP U WITH FAIRLY HEAVY FLOW OF PROJECT PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, WE INTEND TO EXTEND FULL COOPERATION, IF UNDUE DELAYS SHOULD OCCUR, WE CAN THEN COMPLAIN AND HAVE BASIS FOR SEEKING CHANGES. MEANWHILE, THERE IS ADVANTAGE IN HAVING CENTRAL EGYPTIAN POINT FOR BUDGET STANDARDS AND REVIEW, ALTHOUGH THIS DOES NOT RELIEVE US SIDE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLOSER MONITORING OF SALARIES AND OTHER COSTS AS RECOMMENDED REF A. ALSO, WE HOPE FACT THAT NO MENTION HAS BEEN MADE OF ANY MINISTRY OF PLANNING ROLE IN NEW PORCEDURES MAY INDICATE THAT MFA, FOLLOWING STRONG REPRESENTATIONS BY AMBASSADOR (75 CAIRO 12526), LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS DECIDED TO TRY THIS AS ALTERNATIVE. EMBASSY HENCE FORTH WILL REQUEST MFA APPROVALS ON INFORMAL BASIS, AND WILL SEEK BOTH PROMPT ACTION AND EARLY NOTIFICATION OF ANY BUDGETARY CHANGES. CONCERNED US AGENCIES SHOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE EGYPTIAN COOPERATING INSTITUTIONS TO DISCUSS PROPOSALS WITH MFA AT EARLY STATE.
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